

# Birmingham New Music Festival : CHRIS STEELE, PIANO

## PROGRAM

<i>A Southern Prelude</i> .....	William Price
<i>Chaconne No. 1</i> .....	Michael Coleman
<i>Trio for Piano Alone</i> .....	Matthew Scott Phillips
<i>Three Preludes</i> .....	Chris Steele
<i>81</i> .....	Monroe Golden
<i>Sonata (Lasker)</i> .....	Mark Lackey

## NOTES

**William Price's** music has been performed throughout the United States and Europe. An award-winning composer, Price's music has received accolades and commissions from numerous organizations, including ASCAP, the Percussive Arts Society, and the Music Teachers National Association. Dr. Price currently serves as Professor of Music and Coordinator of Theory and Composition at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB).

What does it mean to be "Southern?" Does the term refer to a specific region and how the land shapes our world-view and how the world views us? Or does it refer to the people and our social norms, and how we react to events in our lives? Personally, I would like to think that being "Southern" means that you have to be a good storyteller.

Not that it has to be a good story, mind you, but you have to be able to tell the tale well. Whether it's a long and winding account of some dark family-lore, or just a juicy piece of gossip, in my experience, all good stories have one thing in common, they digress. Digressions provide for a wonderfully intricate narrative, one that is interwoven with various threads that establish complex associations, no matter how tenuous and distant, and make the story oh-so more interesting to a careful listener.

**Michael Coleman** has participated as composer/pianist in numerous new music programs and festivals in the U.S and Russia and has also had works performed in Austria, Bahamas, Costa Rica, France, Kazakhstan, México, and Uzbekistan. He is on the faculties of Pensacola State College and the University of West Florida.

*Chaconne No. 1* is a continuous variation loosely based on a repeating harmonic progression and rhythmic ostinato mixed with sporadic motivic figures which appear in the upper register of the piano. This work is somewhat reminiscent of incidental music.

**Matthew Scott Phillips** has written for orchestra, chamber groups, independent film, live theatre productions, and multimedia presentations, and his music has been played from Brazil, to the United States, to Germany and the Czech Republic. The content of Matthew's compositions are centered around expressions of emotional states, the struggle to understand intellectual and philosophical concepts, the contrast between musical elements symbolic of individualism and those symbolic of social imperative, and of the conflicts between various aspects of the human psyche.

This piece is an expression of the un-oneness inherent in any oneness. It is, like us all, a product of multiple (in this case three) individual ideas, each with their own character, and played in their own set of keys, that act together to give the illusion of an indivisible whole.

**Chris Steele** is Staff Pianist and Instructor of Aural Skills and Class Piano at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He has held previous positions at University of North Carolina's School of the Arts and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Steele holds degrees in piano performance, music theory and collaborative piano from South Alabama, Florida State and UNCG.

**Monroe Golden's** overtone-informed music has been called "delightfully disorienting," "lovely, sumptuous, yet arcane," and "irresistible..., full of wit and beauty." There are three complete audio releases of his music: *A Still Subtler Spirit* (Living Artist Recordings, 2003), *Alabama Places* (Innova Recordings, 2007), and *Incongruity* (self-published, 2011).

A nine-note scale is analogous to partials 2, 3, 9, 17, 19, 27, 51, 57, and 81 -- harmonics perceptively close to equal-temperament -- with pitch and rhythmic structures drawn from those relationships. The piece is 81 measures long, with 9 sections each 9 measures in length, and the note representing the 81st partial sounding on the downbeat of each measure.

**Mark Lackey** composes new music that has been described as "buoyant, at times playful" with "a classical, yet unrestrained lyricism." He earned graduate degrees at The Peabody Institute where his composition teachers included Christopher Theofanidis. His music has been performed by many gifted artists including the National Theatre Orchestra of Brazil, Rhymes With Opera, and the Eastman Wind Orchestra.

*Sonata for Piano: "Lasker"* was written for the late Lloyd Arriola, a particularly masterful interpreter of Romantic literature. The unusual subtitle "Lasker" refers to the work's inception at Lasker Summer Music Festival in rural North Carolina, a classical music festival exploring the connection between Christian faith and art.

# Birmingham New Music Festival: CRAIG HULTGREN, CELLO

## PROGRAM

<i>The Alchemist</i> .....	Jeffrey Hoover
<i>Turning and Turning in the Widening Gyre</i> .....	Charles Norman Mason
<i>Jack's Roses Bloom Red</i> .....	Courtney Caitlin Johnson
<i>Snakeskin (Verso)</i> .....	Holland Hopson
<i>Bystander</i> .....	Dorothy Hindman

## NOTES

For several decades, cellist **Craig Hultgren** has been a fixture on the scenes for new music, the newly creative arts, and the avant-garde. Recently leaving Birmingham after more than 30 years as a member of the Alabama Symphony, he now resides outside of Decorah, Iowa as the farmer-cellist. The New York Classical Review commented that he, "...played with impressive poise and sensitivity..." for Dorothy Hindman's recent chamber music retrospective at Carnegie Hall. At this point, more than 200 works have been created for him.

**Jeffrey Hoover** was born on September 11, 1959, in Anderson, Indiana. He holds a Ph.D. in Fine Arts (Composition and Interdisciplinary Fine Arts) from Texas Tech University, as well as a M.M. and Bch.Sc. from Ball State University. His career in higher education has included both faculty and administrative appointments. He teaches music theory and composition at Sacramento State University, in Sacramento, California.

While the historic image of alchemists transforming lead into gold is widely thought of, the ultimate goal of alchemy was achieving the Magnum Opus (Great Work): removal of impurities, joining of opposites, refinement of materials, and spiritual transformation and enlightenment. The architecture of the music mimics the four broad stages of alchemical processes for the Magnum Opus.

Rome Prize winning composer **Charles Norman Mason** chairs the Department of Composition and Theory at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music. His website is [www.charlesnormanmason.com](http://www.charlesnormanmason.com)

The title *Turning and Turning in the Widening Gyre* is from a Yeats' poem. While the composition is not meant to depict Yeats' poem literally, it is intended to create the sense of spinning out of control, of a zeitgeist that harks back to times that were dark and prone to hatred, the sense of history cycling back to darker days. It was written for Craig who premiered it.

**Holland Hopson** is a sound and media artist, composer and improviser. He often asks performers to listen and respond to what they hear. In this way, Holland's works usually involve interaction between performers--or between performers and electronics.

*Snakeskin (Verso)* is inspired by a visit to the Cahokia Mounds near Collinsville, Illinois, once home to the largest native civilization north of Mexico. In the piece the performer chooses phrases from groups of simple gestures. These phrases influence the shape and progression of the electronic sounds. The cello and electronics together accumulate and erode in processes reminiscent of the construction and eventual abandonment of the Cahokia mounds. *Snakeskin (Verso)* was written for cellist Craig Hultgren.

**Courtney Caitlin Johnson** is a composer from Birmingham, AL and a recent graduate of Samford University where she studied with Mark Lackey. She has composed for solo instruments, choir, and various chamber ensembles. Her compositions are tightly woven with storytelling and are often inspired by literature including the Brontë novels, Longfellow's poems, and the Bible.

*Jack's Roses Bloom Red* is a solo cello piece grieving and celebrating Jack, my friend Najia's adorable cat who sadly passed away last year. She planted roses on his grave and made a poignant Facebook post about them, and I felt moved to write her a cello piece in his memory. He was always the best cat host whenever I went to her house--and the best flirt!

With over 400 performances of her music worldwide, **Dorothy Hindman** is well-established as a unique voice in today's contemporary classical scene. Her friendship with Craig Hultgren goes back to the earliest days of her career, when she had just finished her studies. She credits their musical collaborations, and the activities of the Birmingham Art Music Alliance community, as primary factors in her success today.

The source material for *Bystander* was a publicly posted bystander video documenting a violent, ultimately fatal arrest. Eight excerpts from the audio provided the pitches, dynamics, and fragments of speech in *Bystander*'s eight sections. Like the action and paradoxical inaction that a bystander video documents, the music of *Bystander* is quietly, powerfully disturbing. *Bystander* was written for Craig Hultgren in 2016 and revised in 2019.